

Perth Bengalis back in their best form

From Perth Correspondent

INDIANS are known for their culture far and wide and anywhere on the globe they have settled, they have celebrated successfully their cultural heritage. On July 28, Murdoch University's Nexus Theatre witnessed another such successful occasion by Bengalis of Western Australia.

The auditorium was packed to its capacity. The program started at 7pm sharp to the amazement of many - and disappointment of the few who added an extra couple of minutes and arrived late, living up to the reputation of Indian stretchable time. The magic of the evening was weaved through the crafty Bharatnatyam dance from Archana Aran. This was followed by a unique blend of dance, song and recitation presented by the Bengali Community of WA.

The theme for this potpourri was "Fire". Fire, the symbol of creation, destruction and propagation, has ruled our life over the years, so much so that like 'wanton flies' we get drawn to it and when too near get burned. The item began with an offering to the fire, danced beautifully by young Tanya Mukherjee, and then followed by poems interspersed with

solo and chorus songs.

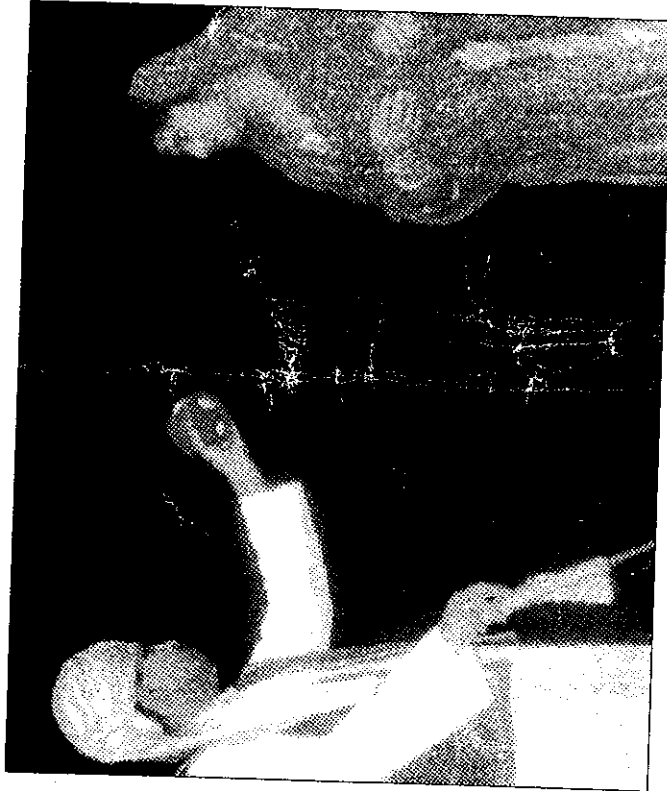
The vocalists for the evening were Rukta Rudra, Deepa Basu, Pritha Mukherji, Tanushree Chakraborty and Chaitali Roy. The poems for the evening were selected from collection of modern Bengali poets and one was written by Suparna Chatterjee. On tabla was Supratik Mukherji, an able disciple of Pundit Kumar Basu who has become a well-known face not only to the community or ethnic functions but has received loud acclaim accompanying the renowned Sitarist Pandit Chandrakant Sardeshmukh on his recent tour of Perth.

The Bangladeshi Community provided a very talented and professional group of performers, who evoked the spirit of the evening with the vibrating tune of a folk dance and also another beautifully choreographed dance to a modern Bengali song. Keeping in tune with the Indian ethos of beauty in diversity, there was wonderful performance from our local Kathak dancer, Sumita Dutta, an able disciple of Pundit Birju Maharaj, who has been able to retain the magic of her footwork and mesmerised the crowd for the evening. The young girls from the Gujrati Community sen-

suously moved to a popular tune from a Bollywood hit to the delight of the jubilant crowd. To bring the first half of the evening to a lingering close were the melodious Bhajans from Mimu Saha, calling up happy memories that we keep neatly folded in our chest.

In the second half was a full-length drama 'Alibaba' that the cast had rehearsed laboriously over three months. As Director Subir Chatterjee said, "I had a dream that one day I would stage 'Alibaba' by our community." But like all dreams, to make it happen a lot of hard work was put in and very aptly at the close of the evening the Director remarked, "I would rather be called a co-ordinator who has got all the people together to make the mission successful."

Several hands worked together to put the figments of dream into reality and two names that cannot go without mention are Biswajit Munshi and Supratik Mukherji. The actors were: Kunal Chakraborty, Anuradha Mukherjee, Biswajit Munshi, Madhumita Munshi, Shubani Ghosh, Supratik Mukherji, Achinto Basu, Anirban Banerjee, Sanjay Ghosh and Kalyan Chakraborty, Pritha



Mukherji with all excelling themselves in all respects. For some it was their debut, while some had previous experiences on stage, but that night it was pure magic that they created and the perfect understanding that the cast showed fails to be captured in words. The compere of the evening (Papri Chatterjee) also did a good job introducing each act with in depth background details.

There was also yummy food on sale for which the chefs (Rohit

Das and Shukla Dutta) were busy in the kitchen, while many others pitched in to help with the sale of the food, raffle tickets and assisted other chores. The evening was a raging success and a great example of teamwork, with the community getting together and putting aside their differences and working hand in hand for the greater picture. Perth Bengalis will cherish this evening for a long time, with another successful annual concert added to their list of achievements over the years.